



OLR RESEARCH REPORT

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STATE AND FEDERAL CIVILIAN MEDALS OF HONOR

By: Daniel Liston, Legislative Analyst II

You asked for (1) examples of other state's civilian medals of honor for heroism, (2) examples of federal medals of honor for heroism, (3) a review of previous legislative efforts to establish a civilian medal of honor in Connecticut, and (4) an overview of Connecticut's Veterans Hall of Fame.

SUMMARY

We surveyed laws in other states and found a number of examples of awards states give for heroism. We found six states that award medals to military or national guard members (Colorado, Massachusetts, North Dakota, New Mexico, North Carolina, and Rhode Island). We found three jurisdictions (Florida, Illinois, and the Virgin Islands) that award medals to police officers, firefighters, or first responders. We found two jurisdictions that award heroism medals to any civilian (Alaska awards a state medal for heroism without reservation, Puerto Rico's Accident-Prevention Council awards civilian heroism).

Federally, the U.S. Congress awards the Public Safety Officer Medal of Valor to police officers, firefighters, or first responders for heroic efforts in an attempt to save or protect human lives. The Central Intelligence Agency awards both the Distinguished Intelligence Cross and the Intelligence Star for heroism by an agency employee. The U.S. Department of Defense awards a medal of valor to department employees or citizens for heroism on or off the job. The U.S. Army, Navy, and Air

Force each award civilian heroism by employees or citizens connected to the respective branch of the armed forces. The transportation secretary awards heroism by a member of the merchant marines, the State Department awards heroism by its employees and those of the U.S. Agency for International Development and Marine guards assigned to diplomatic and consular facilities, and the attorney general awards heroism by employees of the Justice Department. Many other federal awards for heroism are reserved to members of the military.

In a search of legislative proposals from 1988 to 2012, we did not find any previous legislative attempts to establish a civilian award for heroism in Connecticut.

Each year the Connecticut Veterans Hall of Fame, through a selection by its executive board, honors at least ten Connecticut residents who served in the military and, subsequently, made significant positive impact on their respective communities.

EXAMPLES OF OTHER STATES' CIVILIAN MEDALS OF HONOR

A survey of other states' civilian awards for heroism reveals that Alaska has a "State Medal for Heroism," awarded "in recognition of a valorous or heroic deed performed in the saving of a life or for injury or death or threat of injury or death incurred in the service of the state or the citizen's community or on behalf of the health, welfare, or safety of other persons" (AS § 44.09.090).

Puerto Rico empowers its Accident-Prevention Council, under the Office of the Commissioner of Insurance, to "award medals, prizes, and trophies for acts of heroism in the saving of human life and the prevention of accidents" (25 L.P.R.A. § 802).

Other states award heroism by police officers, firefighters, first responders, and members of the military. Table 1 summarizes the awards for heroism other states offer.

Table 1: Examples of States' and Territories' Awards for Heroism

State and Jurisdiction	Eligible Award Recipients
Alaska (AS §44.09.090)	Available to any citizen
Colorado (C.R.S.A. §28-3-1202)	For National Guard members
Florida (F.S.A. §14.33)	For Police, Firefighters, & First Responders
Illinois (IL ST CH 20 §3985)	For Police & Firefighters
Massachusetts M.G.L.A. 33 § 67	For Military members
New Mexico (N.M.S.A. 1978, §20-10-5)	For Military members
North Carolina (N.C.G.S.A. §127A-43)	For Military members
North Dakota (NDCC §37-01-10)	For Military members
Puerto Rico (25 L.P.R.A. § 802)	Available to any citizen
Rhode Island (RI ST §30-8-10)	For Military members
Virgin Islands (1 V.I.C. § 184)	For Police & Firefighters

EXAMPLES OF THE FEDERAL GOVERNMENT'S CIVILIAN AWARDS FOR HEROISM

The U.S. Congress awards the Public Safety Officer Medal of Valor to police officers, firefighters, and first responders for “actions above and beyond the call of duty; and exhibiting exceptional courage, extraordinary decisiveness and presence of mind; or an unusual swiftness of action, regardless of his or her personal safety, in an attempt to save or protect human life” (42 U.S.C.A. § 15201).

The Central Intelligence Agency awards the Distinguished Intelligence Cross and the Intelligence Star for heroism by an agency employee (<https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/additional-publications/the-work-of-a-nation/items-of-interest/medals-of-the-cia.html>).

The U.S. Army awards the Award for Valor for “civilian employees and private citizens who perform an act of heroism or sacrifice, with voluntary risk of personal safety in the face of danger either on or off the job” (http://www.tioh.hqda.pentagon.mil/Awards/award_valor.aspx).

The U.S. Navy awards the Distinguished Civilian Medal for Valor and the Superior Civilian Medal for Valor for heroism by a Navy employee or citizen connected to the Navy (see, Civilian Human Resource Manual (CHRM) Guide 451-02 - Guidance on Implementing Awards Programs, at <http://www.public.navy.mil/DONHR/COMPENSATION/RECOGNITIONAWARDS/Pages/ResourceLibrary.aspx>).

The U.S. Air Force awards the Exceptional Service Award for exceptional services to the Department of the Air Force by United States or foreign civilians, not employed by the U.S. government; or for an act of heroism, involving voluntary risk of life, by any civilian not employed by the U.S. government (<http://www.e-publishing.af.mil/shared/media/epubs/AFI36-2803.pdf>).

The secretary of defense awards the Medal for Valor to a Department of Defense employee or private individual for an “act of heroism or sacrifice with voluntary risk of personal safety in the face of danger either on or off the job” (<http://www.whs.mil/hrd/civilian/LMER/documents/OSDHonoraryAwardsGuidance.doc>).

The transportation secretary may award a member of the Merchant Marines a medal for “acts or service of conspicuous gallantry, intrepidity, and extraordinary heroism under conditions of danger to life and property that would warrant a similar decoration or medal for a member of the armed forces” (46 U.S.C.A. § 51901).

The U.S. Department of State gives the Award for Heroism, in “recognition of acts of courage or outstanding performance under unusually difficult or dangerous circumstances, whether or not in connection with the performance of assigned duties” to “employees of State, [the U.S. Agency for International Development], and Marine guards assigned to diplomatic and consular facilities” (3 FAM 4824).

The Department of Justice gives the Attorney General’s Award for Exceptional Heroism, along with other such awards, to honor department employees who have distinguished themselves in the pursuit of excellence and private citizens who have assisted in a substantial way in furthering the mission of the department (<http://www.justice.gov/jmd/hr/guiawards.htm#ag>).

OVERVIEW OF THE CONNECTICUT VETERANS HALL OF FAME

The Connecticut Veterans Hall of Fame honors Connecticut residents who served in the military and, subsequently, made significant impact on their respective communities as leaders in areas such as the arts, education, public service, volunteer activities, and business. The hall is administered and sponsored by the Department of Veterans' Affairs and the Military Department on behalf of the Governor. Each year the hall's executive committee selects at least ten nominees for induction.

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